

# **A Contemporary Moral Problem**

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*To my mother,  
For believing in the art and truth and  
for supporting the idea of the book.*

## **Preface**

This is a compilation of integrative questions, discussions and reviews, even obvious answers that will serve as both interesting and factual to the reader particularly, those concerned or interested in mere knowledge and application of ethical concepts tackled. Although this is produced with accordance to the technological aspect of the course being taken by the student who provided the answers, this book will still serve as useful to general ideologies applied in the major relevance or value that academic, corporate, and personal areas applies

## Chapter: Egoism and Moral Scepticism

Quote: **“ If we have a positive attitude towards the attainment of the goal, then we may derive satisfaction from attaining that goal. But the object of our attitude is the attainment of the goal; and we must want to attain the goal before we can find any satisfaction in it.”**

What I expect to learn:

To learn the meaning and difference of Egoism and Moral Scepticism aside from it's definition.

What I learned

1. Matter of reasoning
2. How the simple “selfishness and “unselfishness can pertain to a lot of interpretation.
3. The difference of Psychological Egoism from ethical egoism.
4. The measure of one's ego, pertaining to a man.

Review:

James Rachels gave an excellent support for his ideas on Egoism. Rachels gave two differences of Egoism, psychological and ethical egoism derived from the legend of Gyres by Plato's Republic. The story is about a ring that would make it's possessor powerful. I believe that this story goes how one's selfishness is measured through the power of those who wil possess it which is mainly the rogue or the virtuous man. With this story, Rachels examined psychological egoism and ethical egoism, two popular views to attack conventional morality.

At first I did not have a clear idea of egoism. Based from my understanding of it, egoism is just a perplexed definition of Pride. But unfortunately Rachels gave a reason otherwise. Before I thought that selfishness as by definition it just an act based purely on one's intention or self- interest. Rather Rachels gave a deeper stand on the matter. I was impressed with the ideas that Rachels gave to support on the mental fact of humans osychology that humans care about others and not just about themselves.

Five Integrative Questions:

1. How must a man be measured for their selfless or unselfish acts?
2. How is undisciplined pleasure-seeking different from self- interest?
3. Should psychological egoism be accepted in the society?
4. How can one describe the act of being selfish or unselfish?
5. What is ethical altruism?

## Chapter: Religion, Morality and Conscience

Quote:

**“One possible role which religion might play in morality relates to motives people have. Religion, it is often said, is necessary so that people will DO right. Typically, the argument begins with the important point that doing what is right often has costs: refusing to shoplift or cheat can mean people go without some good or fail a test; returning a billfold means they don’t get the contents. Religion is therefore said to be necessary in that it provides motivation to do the right thing.”**

What I expect to learn:

To learn more about the differences of morality and religion in John Arthur’s perspective.

What I learned:

1. Moral reasoning
2. Religion is not necessary for moral motivation.
3. Meaning of morality aside from its definition.

Review:

I believe that morality and religion has a huge difference. Morality as we define it, as a standard of conduct that is generally accepted as right or proper. It is a behavior that we ought to have to live a good life. But how different is morality from religion? In my perspective I define morality as a guide or a set of rules to live a happy and fulfilled life. As for me we are educated to live by it. We try our best to live by these rules for us to keep our life on the right track. As for religion, it is what we live by. We believe that there is of greater existence that we try to live for everyday. A greater power that sets rules for us to follow, to live a good life. Some of us believe that religion is necessary to morality which focuses more on the moral guidance and knowledge rather than on people’s motive. What bothers me is that some people do good things but is not aware if what there are doing is based on the religion that they believe in. I quote John Arthur “Private moral reflection taking place independently if the social world would be no moral reflection at all; and moral education is not only possible, but essential”

Integrative Question:

1. Why isn’t religion necessary for moral motivation?
2. How are morality and religion connected?
3. Why isn’t religion necessary for moral knowledge?
4. How is morality different from religion?
5. Why should people live with these moral standards?

## Chapter: **Master and Slave Morality**

Amazon Link:

Quote: **“Man does not strive after happiness; only the English man does that.”**

What I expect to learn:

To deeply understand the pie fallacy in our society.

What I learned:

1. Adolf Hitler was inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's words.
2. Wealth isn't about having the most money.

Review:

Honestly, I don't quite follow to Nietzsche's perspective. I don't believe in the idea of Will to Power. I somehow disagree to what he said and I quote “It will have to be the incarnated Will to Power, it will endeavor to grow, to gain ground, attract to itself and acquire ascendancy-not owing to any morality or immorality, but because it lives and because life is precisely, Will to Power.”

I was truly inspired by Paul Graham's Essay about the Pie Fallacy. Through his words, I clearly understood by what he meant by “Money is not wealth” which most of us, I admit, thinks that it's the second important thing in the world. While for some, money is there first priority. All the while, we thought that money can make the world go round but I firmly stand and support Graham's point. Money— isn't wealth at all. We can gain wealth not only by making money but also by making use of what we have and making a productive sense about what we can do. We can gain more without making someone any less poor. I would like to quote from Graham a famous line that I want to keep in my heart always. This is when he said that “Money is just something we use to move wealth”. Wealth is what business do. They make something people want.

Integrative Question:

1. How does Nietzsche characterize a good and healthy society?
2. What is Nietzsche's view of injury, violence and exploitation?
3. What is corruption?
4. What is will to power?
5. Enumerate and define the two different types of morality.

## Chapter: **Trying Out One's New Sword**

Amazon Link:

Quote:

**"A similar transaction between us and the Samurai might take even longer. But that is no reason at all for deeming it impossible. Morally as well as physically, there is only one world, and we all have to live in it."**

What I expect to learn:

The true meaning of trying out one's new sword.

What I learned:

1. The meaning behind trying out one's new sword.
2. The meaning of "tsujigiri".

Review:

When I was reading Mary Midgely's essay I remember the book Gai-jin that I saw at the library a week ago. Gai-jin was coined by the Japanese when they call someone whom they think is "Barbaric". But what did Midgely mean by trying out one's new sword? Tzujiguri is a word that means "crossroad -cut" meaning trying out one's new sword on a chance wayfarer. A samurai sword has to be tried out because, if it was to work properly, it had to slice through someone at a single blow, from the shoulder to the opposite flank. Otherwise, the warrior bungled stroke. This could injure his honor, offend his ancestors and even let down his emperor. Even though it is for the benefit of many people, it is still immoral to let the man been experimented. That's why cloning and experimenting condemned in a Christian society because they know that it is immoral. One of the questions that he asked about the custom is "are we qualified to criticize other culture or qualified to criticize the custom named tsujigiri?" Another question is "does the isolating barrier between cultures block praise as well as blame". Last question is "What is involved in judging". These are some questions that Midgely explained in this chapter and left us with these questions to think more deeply.

Integrative questions

- 1) What does Midgely mean about moral isolationism?
- 2) Is custom of tsujigiri morally wrong? Why or why not?
- 3) What can you say about cultures are separate and unmixed?
- 4) How moral isolationism does relate to the custom of Japanese?
- 5) Do we have the right to criticize other cultures?



## **Chapter: Utilitarianism**

### **Amazon Link:**

### **Quote:**

"It has been remarked, that questions of ultimate ends do not admit of proof, in the ordinary acceptance of the term."

### **What I expect to learn:**

To Learn about the meaning of Utilitarianism according to John Stuart Mill.

### **What I learned:**

### **Review:**

Based on how I understood it, higher pleasure means that there is the influence or temptation. For example, some people are deceived by the drugs since this kind of medicine promotes their pleasure or happiness. Some would prefer this kind of happiness since they know that it will eventually give them the highest pleasure by way of forgetting or feeling of numbness in their pains or problems. Since Mill was not persuaded by the belief of epicureans that the happiness or pleasure is the highest good, he suggests that the happiness should be considered in the greater amount of people who would be happy. I also believed that it is the best way to promote happiness. For me, happiness is not always pleasure and the absence of pain. I think it is more on contentment of the happiness or what you have. There are rich people who are not happy even though they have always get their pleasure. But if one person is contented on what he have and what God gave to him, then I think he would attain happiness.

### **Integrative Question:**

1. What is utilitarianism?
2. Explain utilitarianism.
3. What is the theory of morality?
4. Explain how happiness was explained and prioritized by the author.
5. What is the Greatest Happiness Principle?

**Chapter:** James Rachels – The Debate Over Utilitarianism

**Amazon Link:**

**Quote:**

“The idea that happiness is the one ultimate good (and happiness the one ultimate evil) is known as Hedonism. Hedonism is perennially popular theory that goes back at least as far as the ancient Greeks. It has always been an attractive theory because of its beautiful simplicity and because it expresses the intuitively plausible notion that things are good or bad only on account of the way they make us feel.”

**What I expect to learn:**

To deeply understand the controversial debate over Utilitarianism.  
To understand Utilitarianism through Rachels’ perspective.

**What I learned:**

- Main objections to utilitarianism
- Defenders’ side about utilitarianism
- ?Utilitarian doctrine
- ?Utilitarian standard
- ?Role of happiness in our lives

**Review:**

This chapter argues the concept of utilitarianism although it has also right idea, still there are aspects that are wrong. This is the continuation of utilitarianism in the previous chapter. First, utilitarianism has three proposals namely actions are to be judged right or wrong solely in the virtue of their consequences. Thus, we can say that right actions have the best consequences than the wrong actions made by one person. Second, it also takes account the amount of happiness or unhappiness our actions caused. Therefore, the amount of happiness must be much greater than the unhappiness. Third, utilitarianism also gives important to each people’s happiness or majority of people who will be happy.

As to what my understanding is, Rule-utilitarianism has no difficulty coping with the three ant-utilitarian arguments. Act-utilitarian, faced with the situation described, would be tempted to bear false witness against the innocent man because the consequences of that particular act would be good.

**Integrative Question:**

1. What are right actions based on this chapter?
2. State the ideas of happiness and explain each.
3. Explain how happiness matters.
4. What is utilitarian doctrine?
5. What is standard of utilitarianism?

## Chapter: **Categorical Imperative by Immanuel Kant**

Quote:

It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will.

Intelligence, wit, judgment, and any other talents of the mind we may care to name, or courage, resolution, and constancy of purpose, as qualities of temperament, are without doubt.

What I expect to learn:

To know the meaning of categorical imperative

Review:

"According to Kant, human beings occupy a special place in creation, and morality can be summed up in one ultimate commandment of reason, or imperative, from which all duties and obligations derive. He defined an imperative as any proposition that declares a certain action (or inaction) to be necessary. A hypothetical imperative compels action in a given circumstance: if I wish to quench my thirst, I must drink something. A categorical imperative, on the other hand, denotes an absolute, unconditional requirement that asserts its authority in all circumstances, both required and justified as an end in itself. It is best known in its first formulation." - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Categorical\_imperative**

I was confused by the idea of other people tryin to become someone that they are not by providing food and shelter to the need. For example some politicians do this kind of charity for them to be voted by the mass. This situation would lead to widespread mistrust. Eventually, the act of lying would become unnecessary, because people would no longer believe each other; thus eliminating the very reason and need for telling lies.

It is selfish because you expect something in return but Kant also explained a side where in it is meant to be selfish because if it is not, then you would not achieve happiness through good will.

What I learned:

- The good will
- The gifts of fortune
- The good will and its results

Integrative Questions:

1. What is the good will?
2. What are the gifts of fortune?
3. What are the results of good will?
4. State the duties of good will.
5. What are the motives of duty?

Chapter: **The Nature and Value of Rights By Joel Feinberg**

Amazon Link:

Quote:

“One should be happy that they ever treat us well”

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn nature and value of rights and the importance of values in the society.

What I learned:

- Required by duty
- Nature and value of rights
- ☑ Doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties

Review:

“Joel Feinberg (October 19, 1926 - March 29, 2004) was an American political and social philosopher. He is known for his work in the fields of individual rights and the authority of the state.[1] Feinberg helped in shaping the American legal landscape.

Feinberg was internationally distinguished for his research in moral, social and legal philosophy. His major four volume work, *The Moral Limits of Criminal Law*, was published between 1984 and 1988. Feinberg held many major fellowships during his career and lectured by invitation at universities around the world. He was an esteemed and highly successful teacher, and many of his students are now prominent scholars and professors at universities across the country.” (Wikipedia. Retrieved February 13, 2010 [http://en.wikipedia.org/Joel\\_Feinberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/Joel_Feinberg))

I imagine Nowheresville, a place where each and everyone knows their duty and obligations to one another. I don't envision a place where it is ugly so I think nowheresvilleans respect each other which is unlikely to happen. Nowheresville is different from our world in a way that in that place there is no imposed rights. Thus, all the people has no claim rights which we have in the real world. I have learned that rights are very important. Having rights will give each of us moral claim. For example, a parent neglects his son which should be the right of the son. But if there are no rights like in Nowheresville, then the child does not have moral claim to the parents which is for me is wrong. In a good sense of having no rights will also make us more contented.

Integrative Question:

- 1) What is the difference of Nowheresville and the real world?
- 2) What is the relation between duty and rights?
- 3) What does Joel Feinberg wants to express by way of imagining Nowheresville?
- 4) What will happen if the world does not have rights?
- 5) What is the difference of the people living in Nowheresville and the people living in the real world?

## Chapter: **Happiness and Virtue by Aristotle**

### Quote:

Now each man judges well the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. And so the man who has been educated in subject is a good judge of that subject.

### What I expect to learn:

To know about happiness and virtue

### Review:

Happiness is a desirable state for man, a state which for the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, can be achieved through possessing good things. Plato states that “a lover of good things has a desire ... that they become his own. That’s what makes people happy, isn’t it - possessing good things (Five Dialogues, 50).” The split in a method for achieving moral virtue is predicated on the very different definitions given it by Plato and Aristotle, definitions which are erected on the foundation laid by Socrates. Socrates believed that virtue was a concept unknown to man, yet widely regarded by men as easily defined. He methodically sought out those who claimed expertise on the subject of virtue and showed them to be deficient. And while Socrates was able to prove others incomplete in their knowledge, he also lacked a definition of virtue himself.

For me, this chapter is all about studying of how a person defines happiness and virtue. For Aristotle, happiness is not pleasure, honor, or wealth, but an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. Happiness is related to virtue by means that virtue is something that he/she likes to do like vices; it makes him/her happy. Lastly, happiness is related to pleasure because pleasure surely makes a person happy because it is something that a person always wants. Aristotle also explains that virtue is something that a product of training and habits, it is also the mean between the vices of excess and deficiency.

### What I learned:

- Happiness and virtue
- Pleasure
- Moral virtue

### Integrative Questions:

1. What is happiness?
2. What is virtue?
3. What is pleasure?
4. What is moral virtue?
5. Can one man truly achieve happiness? How?

## Chapter: The Nature and Value of Rights By Joel Feinberg

Quote:

“One should be happy that they ever treat us well”

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn nature and value of rights and the importance of values in the society.

What I learned:

- Required by duty
- Nature and value of rights
- Doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties

Review:

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Integrative Question:

- 1) What is the difference of Nowheresville and the real world?
- 2) What is the relation between duty and rights?
- 3) What does Joel Feinberg wants to express by way of imagining Nowheresville?
- 4) What will happen if the world does not have rights?
- 5) What is the difference of the people living in Nowheresville and the people living in the real world?

## Chapter: **Taking Rights Seriously By Ronald Dworkin**

Quote:

Conservatives and liberals do agree that sometimes a man does not do the wrong thing to break a law, when his conscience so requires. They disagree, when they do, over the different issue of what the State's response should be. Both parties do think that sometimes the State should prosecute. But this is not inconsistent with the proposition that the man prosecuted did the right thing breaking the law.

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn why rights are needed to be taught and be taken seriously by us.

What I learned:

I learned that rights are should be taken for because it is the only protection that we can get from the state and for ourselves.

Review:

"Ronald Dworkin, QC, FBA (born December 11, 1931) is an American legal philosopher, currently professor of Jurisprudence at University College London and the New York University School of Law, and former professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Oxford. He is known for his contributions to legal philosophy and political philosophy. His theory of law as integrity is one of the leading contemporary views of the nature of law." (Wikipedia. Retrieved February 8, 2009, [http://en.wikipedia.org/Ronald\\_Dworkin](http://en.wikipedia.org/Ronald_Dworkin))

According to Dworkin, the two important ideas that are behind the institution of rights are faith and respect. Faith means we should believe that the lawmakers are knowledgeable on the rights we have. They know what moral rights should be considered as part of constitution and what moral rights that should not be considered are. Second is respect. We should respect the law in a way that we should try to avoid to break the law. Even though law is said to be not perfect, we should try to follow the rules or laws that are embarked in the constitution. This chapter says that the right thing to do and saying that someone has the right thing to do is different. We should not interfere of other's right because it is like stopping them to express their rights. The two important ideas behind the institution of rights are the political and social. Moral rights that are not legal rights are like when going to church every Sunday and praising the lord even if you do not attend mass you won't be held for a crime.

Integrative Question:

1. What is the law?
2. To what extent the law is applicable?
3. When will we know that we disobeyed the law?
4. What is the baseline before committing a crime?
5. What is right to the law?

## Chapter: A Theory of Justice By John Rawls

### Quote:

I shall maintain instead that the persons in the initial situation would choose two rather different principles: the first requires equality in the assignment of basic rights and duties, while the second holds that social and economic inequalities.

### What I expect to learn:

To understand the theory of justice.

### What I learned:

- Main idea of justice
- Theory of justice
- Two principles of justice
- Justice as fairness

### Review:

According to John Rawls, the conception of original position means that justice depends on the primitive condition of the country. This also means that the person does not know his status, place in the society and etc which strengthen the word justice. This tells the people that there is no one who has advantage over the other because of his social status. Original position is about understanding the meaning of fairness and that everyone should have their own justice. The first principle states that "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others." This definition tells us that each and every one is equal to one another. Everyone has the right to be heard by the people no matter their status in life is. The second principle states that "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and attached to position and offices open to all.". This tells us that everyone's income need not be equal but justice and fairness should be accessible by the people. I believed that each of us should be given rights or opportunities.

### Integrative Question:

1. What is the main idea of justice?
2. Explain the theory of justice.
3. Enumerate the two principles of justice
4. Differentiate the two principles.
5. What do you mean by justice as fairness?



Chapter: **The need for more than justice By Annette Baier**

Amazon Link:

Quotes:

It is easy to exaggerate the differences of view that exist, and I want to avoid that. The differences are as much emphasis as in substance, or we can say that they are differences in tone of voice. But these differences do tend to make a difference in approaches to a wide range of topics not just in moral theory but in areas like medical ethics.

What I expect to learn:

To know the need for more than justice

What I learned:

Review:

Justice perspective means adhering to laws, rules and regulations of the society. While, care perspective means the love, care and etc. Males are more on justice perspective, while female tends to focus on care perspective. These perspectives were developed through moral development which focuses on the development of female and male. But what does Baier mean by to transvalue the values of our patriarchal past"? In my perspective, in order to replace our values from the past, we should replace it with new values based on morality. Baier points out two evils which are isolations and powerlessness. We define Isolation from detaching ourselves from the people we know and love, even deataching ourselves from the world. Powerlessness as stated by Baier is weakness. I learned that Gilligan's and Baier's point of view is different from Kohlberg. According to Kohlberg, moral development starts from pre-conventional level to a conventional level, which there should be a test in order for that person to be accepted in the group. Yes, everybody needs to go through stages in life where they will meet new people and try to fit in a group. We tend to adjust our morality so that people would accept us. This is where we practice and nurture the theories and facts of life. We try to practice justice and equality with people that we come to know in the walk of life.

Integrative questions

- 1) What is the difference between Gilligan's view and Kohlberg's view?
- 2) What is the difference between male and female's perspective in justice?
- 3) What is moral development theory?
- 4) What are the two evils said by Baier?
- 5) What are the two perspectives?